NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE - MEDFORD, OREGON

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The Crater Chronicle

NWS Unveils Its Vision of a Weather-Ready Nation

By John Lovegrove, Meteorologist-In-Charge

The weather across much of the Nation this year has been exceptional: devastating tornado outbreaks in the Southeast and Missouri, extreme drought in Texas, seemingly never-ending floods on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, and historic flooding from both Hurricane Irene and the remnants of Tropical Storm Lee. We seem to have gotten off relatively easy here in Southern Oregon and Northern California, but we all know how quickly that can change. We just have to remember back to the tsunami in March or the tremendous snowfall in Mount Shasta in December 2009. While we can't change the weather, we can change how we prepare for and respond to weather.

The National Weather Service has begun a Weather-Ready Nation initiative with the vision of a society that is prepared for and responds to weather-dependent events. The NWS has written a new Strategic Plan called, "Building a Weather-Ready Nation," accessible at: **www.weather.gov/com/stratplan/**. The new Strategic Plan establishes six goals:

1) Improve weather decision services for events that threaten lives and livelihoods;
2) Deliver a broad suite of improved water forecasting services to support management of the Nation's water supply;
3) Enhance climate services to help communities, businesses, and governments understand and adapt to climate-related risks;
4) Improve sector-relevant information in support of economic productivity;
5) Enable integrated environmental forecast services supporting healthy communities and ecosystems;
6) Sustain a highly-skilled, professional workforce equipped with the training, tools, and infrastructure to accomplish our mission.

What does this mean to our area? The NWS in Medford and offices in other western states have been working towards many of these goals for several years. We have reached out to our communities to better understand weather impacts. Communications with our partners have been improved so that the two-way flow of information is more effective. We strive to better target our information with both timing and areas affected, so that impacted communities can take action, but much more remains to be accomplished.

Our partners in emergency services, transportation, water management, and more will continue to see the NWS reaching out to them, so that we can better support them and the community as a whole. The overall goal is to provide the information that people and our partners need in order to make decisions necessary to respond to weather, taking us down the path to become part of a Weather-Ready Nation.

Vision

Society is Prepared For and Responds To Weather-Dependent Events in a Weather-Ready Nation.

Mission

Provide Weather, Water, and Climate Data, Forecasts, and Warnings; Protect Life and Property; Enhance the National Economy.

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Fall Begins September 23 at 2:04 am PDT.

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Daylight Savings Time Ends November 6! Set Your Clocks Back One Hour!

Cooperative Observer Honored With National Award

NWS Medford Meteorologist-In-Charge John Lovegrove presented the John Campanius Holm Award to Marian Hayden, a cooperative observer in Callahan, California, on September 1. The certificate is signed by the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Marian has been taking daily readings for over 40 years. She was also presented with an award for 40 years of service to the NWS Medford office.

NWS Medford MIC John Lovegrove, left, presents the Holm Award and a 40-Year Length of Service Award to Callahan, CA, cooperative observer Marian Hayden, right, earlier in September. The white weather station shelter is shown in the background.

The Holm Award is to honor National Weather Service Cooperative Observers for outstanding accomplishments in the field of meteorological observations. It is named for a Lutheran minister, the first person known to have taken systematic weather observations in the American Colonies. Reverend Holm made observations of climate without the use of instruments in 1644 and 1645, near the present site of Wilmington, Delaware. No more than twenty-five Holm awards are given annually.

The NWS Cooperative Observer Program has been in existence since 1890. According to the program's website, it is "truly the Nation's weather and climate observing network of, by, and for the people. More than 11,000 volunteers take observations on farms, in urban and suburban areas, National Parks, seashores, and mountaintops. The data are truly representative of where people live, work and play."

The COOP's mission is two-fold: to provide observational meteorological data, usually consisting of daily maximum and minimum temperatures, snowfall, and 24-hour precipitation totals, required to define the climate of the United States and to help measure long-term climate changes; and to provide observational meteorological data in near real-time to support forecast, warning and other public service programs of the NWS.

Most cooperative observers volunteer their time to provide this important data. In addition to taking daily observations, they also prepare monthly reports that are submitted to NWS offices for review before being forwarded on to the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) in Asheville, NC, for archiving. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin all were noted weather observers with extensive written records kept during each of their lifetimes.

NWS Medford Team Receives Regional Award

The Upper Air Team of the NWS Medford office has been presented with the 2011 Western Region Isaac Cline Award for Upper Air. The Western Region of the NWS encompasses eight western states and 24 forecast offices. The awards are named in honor of Isaac M. Cline, one of the most recognized employees in National Weather Service history. Mr. Cline made numerous contributions to the mission of the U.S. Weather Bureau, which became known as the National Weather Service in 1970. Most noteworthy of his accomplishments were the actions Isaac Cline took during the Galveston hurricane of 1900, the deadliest weather event in U.S. history. Isaac Cline's acute understanding of weather conditions and his heroic forecasts and hurricane warnings saved several thousand lives.

The team was honored with the award for its sustained excellence in providing upper air observations. Data Acquisition and Program Manager Charles Glaser oversees the team of observers that include James Bunker, Marc Spilde, Megan Woodhead, and Michael Ottenweller. Electronic Systems Analyst Darren Dixon and Electronic Technicians Matt Wymore, Paul Halleck, and Dave Kauwe oversee all maintenance on the equipment.

The Upper Air team is now in contention for the Isaac Cline Award at the national level. The decision will be made at National Weather Service Headquarters this fall.

A weather balloon before release is shown above. The Upper Air Team at NWS Medford was recently honored with a regional award for sustained excellence in its upper air observations.

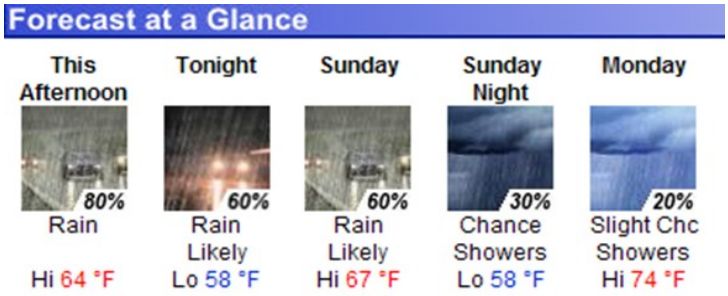
It's Just a Land of Confusion in Communication

By Ryan Sandler, Warning Coordination Meteorologist

In the world of weather forecasting, meteorologists speak the same language using jargon and acronyms. Many meteorologists have been in this world so long they don't realize that non-meteorologists don't always understand them.

Years ago, I once heard a meteorologist use the word "quasi" while receiving a phone call from the public. How many times have you used quasi in your daily conversations? Quasi means similar to, but not exactly the same as. Its synonyms are semi and somewhat. Meteorologists frequently use quasi when describing a nearly stationary surface front, i.e., a front that has little movement. I know what you're thinking…too much information.

Let's use an everyday example of communicating the weather message with the probability of precipitation. Meteorologists like to shorten probability of precipitation to the acronym POP. Take a look at the forecast below and answer the question.



Question: For this afternoon the meteorologist says the chance of rain is 80%. You understand this to mean:

A. Rain will occur 80% of the day;

B. At a specific point in the forecast area there is an 80% chance of rain occurring;

C. There is an 80% chance that rain will occur somewhere in the forecast area during the day;

D. **80% of the forecast area will receive rain and 20% will not.**

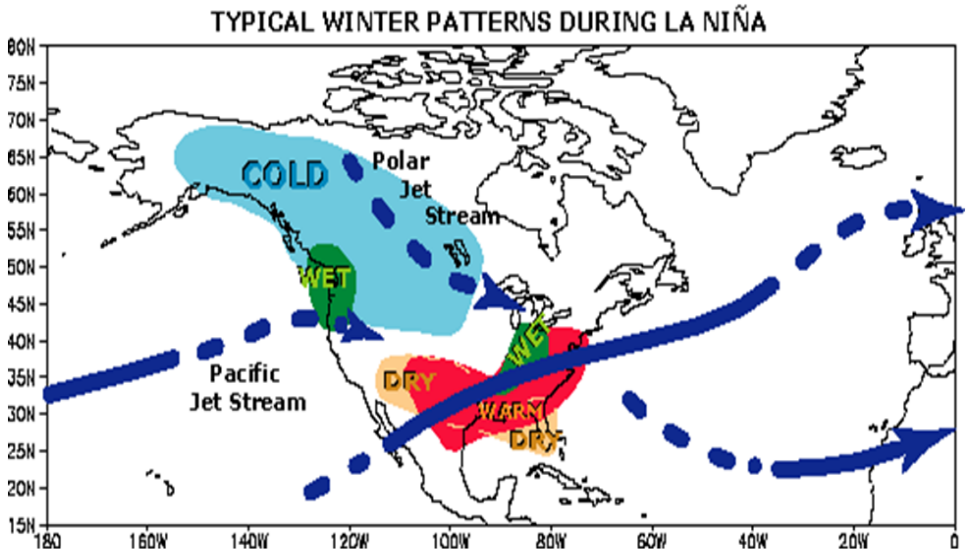
So what's your answer? Most people get this wrong. Probability of precipitation is a very common way that meteorologists communicate important information in the forecast. Let's say that I'm planning to pour $50,000 worth of concrete on Monday. There is a 20% chance of rain, but just a little rain would ruin the job. I would probably delay pouring the concrete if the probability of precipitation on Tuesday was 0% or 5%.

On the other hand, I would plan on taking my kids to the park on Monday based on the forecast. I would not let a 20% chance of rain change my plans, although I may have a backup plan in my head. If it does rain on Monday I can always take them indoors for ice cream or to the movies.

Oh, you probably (pun intended) want to know the answer; it's B. Most people pick C. The definition is the probability that precipitation (at least 0.01 inch) will be reported at a certain location during a specified period of time. Therefore, a perfect forecast for an 80% chance of rain at your house would result in at least 0.01 inch of rain 8 out of 10 times, and no rain or less than 0.01 inch of rain 2 out of 10 times. Are you still confused? It makes perfect sense to a meteorologist.

La Niña Poised to Return for Winter 2011-2012

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center issued a La Niña Advisory late this summer, as cooler waters in the tropical Pacific Ocean have re-emerged and are expected to strengthen, signaling the return of La Niña. La Niña is expected to last through the winter, and this typically leads to wetter than normal conditions in the Pacific Northwest with drier than normal conditions across the southern tier of the U.S. La Niña occurs about every 3 to 5 years, and back-to-back episodes of La Niña occur almost 50% of the time. This follows a June 2010-May 2011 episode of La Niña, which ended when tropical Pacific Ocean waters warmed slightly and became closer to normal, known as a neutral state.



Get Prepared with Pacific Northwest Winter Weather Awareness Week

The next edition of The Crater Chronicle in December will focus on winter weather information, but you can prep for winter well in advance with the Pacific Northwest Winter Weather Awareness Week. This year, the awareness week will take place from October 16-22. Each day, a new topic will be covered that relates to winter weather hazards and safety as well as watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service. This week will give you the opportunity to review your winter preparedness plans, whether at home, at the office, or at school. If you are new to the Pacific Northwest, this week will give you an overview of what winter in the Pacific Northwest can bring and how you should prepare.

The Pacific Northwest experiences a variety of winter weather hazards each year. Snow and ice routinely fall in the mountains but can also wreak havoc in the lower valleys during cold outbreaks by snarling traffic and closing schools and businesses. Strong storms can also bring high winds and heavy rain to the coast, knocking down trees and power lines. High winds can also spread inland through the valleys, into the mountains, and east of the Cascade Crest, making for dangerous travel in high-profile vehicles. When strong winds combine with snow, blizzard conditions can result. Dangerous wind chills also occur when strong winds occur with very cold temperatures.

Public Information Statements will be issued each day during the Winter Weather Awareness Week and will be available for review on the web pages of National Weather Service offices Seattle, Portland, Pendleton, Boise, Pocatello, Spokane, and Medford. You can also listen to the announcements on NOAA Weather Radio.

The week begins on Sunday the 16th with an overview of the upcoming week. Monday will focus on winter weather safety, while Tuesday spotlights winter weather outlooks, watches, warnings, and advisories. Wednesday deals with blizzards, snow and ice storms, wind chills, and avalanches before the focus shifts to flooding on Thursday. Wind storms are highlighted on Friday, then the week closes out on Saturday with a summary of Winter Weather Awareness Week.

When winter weather begins to threaten the Pacific Northwest, remember you can access all National Weather Service outlooks, watches, warnings, and advisories through the NWS web site, local TV and radio stations, and NOAA Weather Radio.

For more information on the Pacific Northwest Winter Weather Awareness Week, you can visit the following website: **http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/winterawareweek.php**

Above - A Sno-Cat became stuck near the top of Mount Ashland in southwest Oregon during a recent winter.

Above - The National Weather Service Doppler Weather Radar for the Medford office sits encased in ice and snow at the top of Mount Ashland.

Winter Spotter Training Coming Soon!

Keep Checking Our Website for Details

National Weather Service - Medford, Oregon

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Visit Our Website!

http://www.weather.gov/medford

Our Vision

Professionals focusing on science, teamwork, and customer service to design and deliver the best decision-support information to our community.

Our Mission

Our team at the National Weather Service Office in Medford strives to deliver the best observational, forecast, and warning information through exceptional customer service, extensive training and education, maintaining quality electronic systems, and relying upon an outstanding team of weather spotters and cooperative observers. We do this within the overall mission of the NWS:

To provide weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas, for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national information database and infrastructure which can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community.

Our Values

Trust, Integrity, Professionalism, Service, Teamwork, Ingenuity, Expertise, and Enthusiasm.

About Us

The Weather Forecast Office in Medford, Oregon, is one of more than 120 field offices of the National Weather Service, an agency under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Department of Commerce. The Weather Forecast Office in Medford serves 7 counties in southwestern Oregon and 2 counties in northern California, providing weather and water information to more than a half-million citizens. We are also responsible for the coastal waters of the Pacific Ocean from Florence, Oregon, to Point St. George, California, extending 60 miles offshore. The office is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year by a team of 26 meteorologists, hydrologists, electronic technicians, hydro-meteorological technicians, and administrative assistants, under the direction of Meteorologist-In-Charge John Lovegrove.